

Paradize

By Martin Brady

Creative commons, Non Commercial, No Derivatives, Free To Share

Imagine a world over run by Zombies. Civilization has crumbled and everyone is on the run. There are many stories like this which I love. Often I wonder what would the world be like if a cure really was found. How would the survivors on the run adjust while trying to reclaim normal lives. Who would be the crazy ones then? How would the cure work? Would people still be a little bit Zombie? Welcome to the City of Paradize where nothing is quite as it seems.

Table of Contents

The Boundary.....	2
Immigration.....	4
Not Like The Other Guys.....	6
The Call.....	7
The Million Dollar Question.....	8
Paradize City, Day Zero.....	10
Bipolar.....	11
The Pool Table.....	12
Basketball.....	14
Hallozeen.....	16
Zfree Day.....	18
Payak And Hide.....	20

The Boundary

A world full of Zombies.

This was the world Liam had been born into and his father had protected him all his life. The Zombies were fast but his father had developed tools and techniques to deal with them which included sleeping in trees and various combat and escape tactics. Still over the years their numbers dropped until Liam was left with his father as they scavenged for food.

They followed a sign to a place called Paradize.

"Why are they attracting the Zs?" asked Liam as they made it to the outskirts of the city. "They'll over-run the city." He looked on from his vantage at the perimeter to the city which was fortified with towers and walls.

Sirens rang out and the Zs kept coming.

His father Sean looked through his binoculars.

The Zs were being channelled into gates and being prodded like cattle.

"I've heard rumours they have a vaccine," replied Sean who was his father.

Liam shook his head. "If I hear that one more time..."

However Sean quickly turned and threw a knife at a Z who had discovered their position and they were on the run from a hoard.

Ahead of them in the distance there was a whirring noise and Sean looked up as they ran towards the city walls.

It was a helicopter and men in black suits sat on the edge of it and were looking out.

Soon the helicopter was above them. They dropped down on ropes and the men wrestled Sean to the ground who was killing Zs. The shouted at him, telling him to stop and wrestled him to the ground. The approaching Zs were shot with darts and then began to writhe on the ground and then settled.

Liam was picked up and placed on the helicopter with his father who had been bound.

The Zs which were shot were also placed on board.

Sean was shaking his head and screaming.

He kicked out at the Zs near him but one of the masked men revealed his face.

"My name is Tyrell," said the soldier. "We have a vaccine for the infected. Welcome to Paradize." Tyrell's face was scarred and his teeth were blackened in parts. "We're Zfree. Don't be scared."

Liam looked down from the helicopter at the Zs which were channelled and herded. Each was being inoculated and placed in recovery rooms.

"So it's over?" asked Liam.

Tyrell smiled in a half-human half-Z way.

Immigration

Liam and Sean were brought through one of the many recovery rooms where thousands of Zs who had received the cure were slowly becoming Zfree. They were classified into different group. Some were able bodied but other needed limbs and close care. Zfree nurses tended to their every need.

Liam and Sean were brought to immigration and placed in a holding cell. For the most part the other cells were empty and they were given some forms to fill.

"I can't read," said Liam looking at the small writing. "I only know a few words."

"I'll read it for the both of us," said Sean.

The document explained the Terms And Conditions of living in Paradize for the non-infected.

At the bottom was room for their signatures.

A man with a badge called Tong walked in and sat on the opposite side of the bars and smiled at them.

"How are you today?" asked Tong in a friendly way. Like them he was non-infected but elderly.

"Why are we behind bars?" asked Sean.

"We need to be sure you understand and accept this place," explained Tong. "Many of the non-infected have become feral and cannot adjust."

"HOW MANY?" replied Sean immediately.

Tong frowned not quite understanding the question. "There are over six millions citizens in the city." He moved his glasses up the bridge of his nose.

"How many like us?" asked Liam understanding his father's question.

"Ah, how many non infected in the city?" replied Tong. He looked up to think about it for a minute. "Less than one percent. A couple of thousand give or take."

Tong passed in another form.

"You should get inoculated, it'll help you fit in - if that's what you want. You need to sign the documents before you are allowed entry to the city," explained Tong. He handed Liam a document explaining where the inoculation centres were and how to apply.

"Why aren't you inoculated?" asked Sean suspiciously.

"This is my job to deal with the non-infected. It makes more sense for me to be... like you." He smiled.

"And if we don't sign?" asked Sean.

"You can fend for yourself on the outside. No problem."

Sean looked at his son Liam who could barely read or write and felt a pang of failure in his

upbringing of his son.

"I want my son to be able to read and write. Can you help with that?"

"Of course! We can enrol him as soon as you sign."

Sean picked up the pen, knowing what he needed to do.

He signed and Liam placed his mark on the page.

"Welcome to Paradize!" smiled Tong and the cell was opened.

Not Like The Other Guys

Liam had been in Paradise six months. He had finally plucked up the courage to ask Carol out for a date.

She was one of the only non-infected in the school.

As they drove home from the Drive Thru movie, the car ran out of gas.

"I'm out of gas honest!" said Liam.

Carol made a face.

"Really!"

They walked home.

"You know I'm not like the other guys," explained Liam.

Carol smiled. "I know but that's why I like you. I'm tired of Zs."

"Serge told me that you were his girl."

Serge was the Alpha-Z in the class.

"We're just friends," explained Carol.

"What did you think of the movie?" asked Liam.

"I'm not that mad about thrillers, I prefer Zombie movies," admitted Carol.

They held hands as they walked home.

The Call

Liam was studying for his exam when he got the call.

"This is Officer Roberts from Paradize Police Department, may I speak with Marjorie."

"Sure," said Liam and Marjorie answered.

Marjorie was uninfected and the closest thing he had to a mother since he had settled in the town of Paradize.

They had met Marjorie through a friend of a friend and Marjorie had moved in with his dad who was struggling with his new life.

"Uh-huh," said Marjorie on the phone. "Thank you so much officer. We'll be right down."

Marjorie put the phone down.

"Is Dad all right?" asked Liam.

"He's in trouble again," sighed Marjorie. "Another fight."

They drove to the police station.

Liam sat in the waiting area while his father was escorted out.

Sean's face was bruised and one of his eyes was swollen.

They got into the car and Marjorie drove them home.

"You want to talk about it?" asked Marjorie.

Sean smelled of alcohol.

"Fucking Zs," complained Sean.

"We're Zfree honey," replied Marjorie.

However Sean leaned forward and let out his slow stinking breath.

"Once a Z, always a Z," griped Sean.

He lay back and slumped on his seat then sleep took him.

The Million Dollar Question

Liam sat at the back of his science class with the two other non-infected one of whom was Carol.

The other non infected student was Rakesh who mostly kept to himself and was super smart.

The science labs were well equipped but today there would be no science lectures.

Instead one of the scientists from Paradize Laboratories was in to do a presentation on the vaccine.

Her presentation began where she explained the origins of the Z virus which had first appeared in Central Congo and spread worldwide.

Tanya showed the dynamic slide. "Infection rates were at one hundred percent and growing exponentially. In our underground laboratories which are located in the heart of our city our chief scientists worked day and night to find a cure."

The twin scientists called Peyak and Taku who ultimately found the cure stood together in a photo. They were identical in looks with Native American looks but had strange spiky dark blond hair.

"Their father Chetan was a Nobel Award winning virologist who taught them everything he knew before he succumbed to the Infection and died. The two brothers swore to find a cure and save the human race. During the testing of the cure Taku died in a laboratory fire but Peyak found the cure for the Infection." She took out a vial and showed it to the class. "And here is it!"

Rakesh put up his hand. "How does it work?"

"That's the million dollar question!" smiled Tanya. "Without getting too technical," she said.

However Rakesh smiled. "No please do."

She smiled at the non-infected boy. "It's a mutagenic RNA based virus with dynamic receptor detection and it also acts as a protein inhibitor in the cytosol for certain Z message protocols and also reprograms the nucleus."

"So it just stops the virus, it doesn't kill it."

Tanya nodded. "Exactly."

Rakesh sat forward. "So it isn't a cure. All you've done is stopped the virus."

Tanya listened. "We prefer to think that we've taken the best parts of the virus and removed the worst parts."

"Like eating people," said Rakesh.

"If you don't shut up I'll eat you for lunch," replied Serge who was the Alpha-Z in the class. He showed his blackened teeth at Rakesh and snapped them together. Many of the Zfree looked angrily at Rakesh.

However Tanya had the final word. "I think it's fair to say that the world is a better place than it was, don't you?" countered Tanya.

Liam kicked Rakesh under the table and Rakesh reluctantly nodded. Liam did not want to feel even more socially isolated than he already was.

The bell rang and the science class was over.

Carol gathered her books together and her eyes opened wide.

"Awkward..." she commented and disassociated herself from Liam and Rakesh.

She looked at Rakesh in a dismissive way and caught up with Serge.

Serge placed his hand on her shoulder and they laughed together.

Liam looked unhappily at Rakesh.

"You're not helping," complained Liam.

Paradize City, Day Zero

Somehow the virus had made its way into the secure underground research facility.

Normally calm scientists were shouting and screaming.

The madness on the surface had made its way into the research facility under Paradise City.

Payak had been bitten and there was only seconds left for him to react before the Z chain reaction made its way to his brain and he would be a Z.

His colleagues lay on the ground. Some were half-eaten.

A fire was raging.

Payak reached to the table in front of him and knew what he needed to do.

There was no time but to act.

In nearby cages the monkeys were screaming and pulling on their cages as they smelled the smoke,

Payak injected himself with the experimental Zfree vaccine that had been worked on.

Almost as soon as he did, he felt his body begin to react to it.

The sensation overtook the Z virus.

His breathing slowed and his mind cleared. He bandaged his wound.

Strange lines had formed on his skin and his teeth blackened.

His eye pupils darkened a little but otherwise he felt the same.

I'm Zfree! he thought.

A Z rose and tried to attack him but he was suddenly as fast as them.

He knocked it to the ground and inoculated his former colleague who quickly recovered.

He took the other vaccine and began inoculating everyone.

Their numbers grew.

He programmed the mix into the giant viral reactor chambers in the underground facility and the city of Paradize was born.

Soon there would be millions of injections available.

Bipolar

Liam stood inside the house when the cops arrived.

His father Sean was on the outside lawn and holding a sweeping broom while shouting obscenities at the neighbor across the road.

"COME OVER HERE AND SAY THAT TO MY FACE YOU Z!" he shouted.

Marjorie sighed.

The cops took out their Tasers and took Sean down.

"This is happening too often," said police officer Ranks. "We're gonna have to keep him in for a psyche evaluation."

Marjorie nodded and Liam just shook his head.

Three days later they sat in the office of the psychiatrist.

"Your father is bipolar," said the psychiatrist. "That is the reason for his mood swings. I've prescribed him some medication."

"I just though he hated Zombies," commented Liam.

The psychiatrist made a disappointed face. "We don't like to use that word here young man," she explained.

"Sorry," replied Liam. "The infected."

"He's waiting for you outside," said the psychiatrist. "He's very sorry about what happened." She paused. "But if it happens again we might need to take more drastic action. Hopefully it won't come to that."

Marjorie pursed her lips and nodded.

The Pool Table

Since his release, Sean worked in the basement of the house.

Sounds of drills and hammers knocking on nails echoed around the house.

Eventually Liam was allowed in.

Liam looked at the den with the pool table and the couch with the giant TV and a fridge for beer.

"Well what do you think?" asked Sean.

Liam looked at the pool table.

There were no pool balls and no cues.

"You're finished?" asked Liam.

Sean nodded.

Then Liam sighed.

"What are you really up to?" asked Liam. He folded his arms.

Sean leaned into Liam.

"Watch this."

He pushed on a hidden lever in the wall and a set of doors opened with room for weapons.

"Hey presto!" said Sean.

He sat on a chair and pressed a remote control button.

The pool table slid back revealing a crawl space with multiple exit points outside.

"We'll be prepared for the next outbreak."

Liam raised his eyes.

"The war is over dad!" said Liam. "There is a cure!"

Sean raised his arms. "But you told me yourself, it only stops the virus! Are you willing to tell me that what is out there is normal?"

Liam wiped his hands over his eyes. "WE have to become normal again. Being out there on the run damaged us! Don't you see that? We're not the normal ones."

Sean shook his head. "You have to trust me Liam. It's all going to start up again I can feel it and we need to be prepared!!"

Liam sat on the sofa. His father was not listening to him.

"I have a girlfriend," said Liam. "She's heard you are crazy."

"I kept you alive all these years. If that's what makes me crazy, so be it!" Sean lifted his arms up in the air.

"Her name is Carol." Liam sat back. "Go on ask the question."

"What question?" asked Sean but he was itching to ask it.

"ASK IT!" demanded Liam.

"Is she..." Sean wanted to know if she was Zfree.

However Liam just got up out of his seat and stormed up the stairs before Sean could complete his sentence.

"I REST MY CASE!" shouted Liam and he slammed the door.

Basketball

Liam played basketball in the back yard of his house. It was a fine day in the town of Paradize. The sun beamed down and Marjorie, his step-mom looked out the window at him as she prepared dinner. Liam talked to himself like he was in some big NBA game and the seconds where ticking down. He lifted the basketball over his head and shot for the hoop. The ball spun around and Liam smiled. It dropped into the net.

Three points!

Then the emergency alarm started. It was a low whining noise and everyone knew what to do.

“This is an Emergency. Please close all doors and secure your properties!” said the automated voice from the speaker system which had been installed Citywide.

It was the Early warning system for a Zombie outbreak.

Liam tried to run into his house but stopped suddenly short when he heard a scream and then the neighbor’s kid Fred Stenz appeared on the top of the wall and hissed at Liam.

The fast acting virus had already taken him and Liam figured he would not be able to make it into the safety of the house on time.

All houses were fitted to be Zombie proof once you were inside.

His dad's training came to hand and he backed up and picked up the basketball, using what was nearby for defense.

Fred jumped catlike in the air and Liam slammed the basketball into Fred's face and then made it into the safety of the house.

Fred clawed at the door but could not get in.

Within minutes the Special Forces arrived in their helicopter and slid down ropes wearing their black bite proof suits. They stunned Fred and then gave him the vaccine.

Initially Fred fought them and then settled as the virus was contained and he was airlifted to hospital.

After twenty minutes or so, the All Clear alarm rang but Liam rubbed a tear out of his eye.

“What's wrong?” asked Marjorie. “He'll be fine, he got the vaccine.”

“It's not that,” replied Liam.

“What is it then?” she asked and gave Liam a small hug.

“I'm the only kid on the street who doesn't have vaccine now,” he said. He looked out the front window at the kids who had once been Zombies but were cured and were now back playing again. They wore Z-Free fashions which were goth like and they wrestled each other to the ground and did pretend biting motions on each other for fun, playing Hide and Bite. Many of them had skin grafts where they had been originally infected but they still retained much of strength and speed of their previous forms. They had been cured but they were different.

Soon, there will be no pure humans like me left in school, thought Liam.

“Go on out there and make some new friends,” said Marjorie.

Liam looked up at Marjorie, refusing to move.

“They won't bite you.”

Hallozeen

Hallozeen

Marjorie was having a row with Sean.

Liam listened at the door in a concerned way because he felt that Marjorie kept the house together.

"I can't keep carrying you financially Sean, you have to be able to keep down a job!"

"I got a job as a taxi driver," he replied.

"How long will it be before you lose your temper and have to look for another one?"

"I'll keep this one!" insisted Sean. "And I'll drive you to work."

"Great!" said Marjorie.

Outside it was Halloween and getting dark.

The door bell rang.

Carol arrived all dressed up as a witch to help Liam hand out the Candy and waved goodbye to Marjorie and Sean.

Liam was left alone with Carol who stood in from of him with her fishnet stockings and tight witch outfit.

"How to I look?" she asked doing a quick turn.

"You look absolutely..." He paused looking for the right word. "Awesome!"

Taxi

Sean dropped off Marjorie and took his first fare.

A group of Zfrees piled into his car.

One of them had a mohican and gave the address to a nightclub down-town.

They were loud and annoying.

Sean sucked in some air and looked at his sign.

Patience is a virtue.

As they drew closer to the nightclub, the Alpha-Z leaned forward.

"HEY!" shouted the Zfree. "I'M TALKING TO YOU!! HEY!!!"

Sean was about to boil over but instead stayed composed and pulled the car into the nightclub.

"Sir," said Sean. "Are you talking to me?"

He met eyes with the young man with the leather jacket and the mohican.

"YEAH I'M TALKING TO YOU."

Sean looked in the mirror of his car at the young Zfree.

"KEEP THE CHANGE!" shouted the guy. "HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!"

The tip was twenty dollars.

Sean looked at the patience sign and pocketed the tip.

Respite

Outside there were fireworks in the hospice.

Marjorie signed on to her shift and wished she was at home on a night like this but needed the money.

She stressed about Sean's ability to cope.

She did her rounds and then met Mrs MacIntyre who was on the terminal patient list.

She sat down with the old lady who was dying from old age.

She was one of the older lucky ones who had been inoculated and could die like a normal person.

Marjorie liked to talk with her. It helped pass the time.

They both looked out at the fireworks and the kids on the distant street dressed up in their costumes.

"You know," said Mrs MacIntyre, "sometimes I have dreams about when I was infected. The hunger was incredible."

She chewed on her favourite toffees which stuck to her dentures.

"It's over now," reassured Marjorie.

"You know something dear," said the old lady.

"What?" asked Marjorie.

"I lost count of the number of people I ate." She thought about her words as she chewed her favourite toffees.

Marjorie nodded, slowly taking her hands away from the old lady and carried on her rounds.

She went into the laundry room and blessed herself saying a silent prayer then regained composure.

Zfree Day

Once a year in Paradize was a new national holiday to celebrate Zfree day when Payak tried the vaccine on himself and began the chain reaction to reclaim the surface from the Zs.

Over the years, Payak became quite eccentric and remained in his underground laboratories rarely coming to the surface. When he did such as on Zfree day people went crazy with joy to see him and be in his presence. It appeared to many that they lost leave of their senses when Payak was around.

He was dressed in an exotic patchwork of clothing that made him look totally unique and wore all sorts of hats which also included a top hat once worn by the leaders of his native American tribe which had first made their deals with the European settlers many hundreds of years before. Payak was a strange enigma. He had darkened blond spiky hair but he was unmistakably native American in looks. In the underground facility he chose to surround himself with Zfree native Americans from his tribe who were fiercely loyal to him. The irony was not lost on anyone that it was a native American who had saved the new world Americans from the Z virus.

He got up onto the stage, limping a little and wearing his trademark hat and suit. His eyes were hidden by his trademark rimless sunglasses and he leaned into the microphone to impart his gentle but heartfelt speech.

"I love you," he said almost as a whisper. "I love you all."

The crowd went crazy with delight.

He gave them a trademark wave and the reclusive man sat down beside the Mayor who would do most of the talking.

Mayor Neils Hickory stood up. He was a strongly built man who was one of the first Zfrees who led hunter converter team to successfully reclaim the city by his own kind.

He was popular but less so.

The seated crowds clapped and those at the back stood and waved a little.

In total there were over one hundred thousand that day and the uninfected had been given their own spot to sit.

"How ya doing? How ya doing? How y'all doing?" he said smiling in his easy way.

He paused.

There was some more cheering and clapping.

"You know I became Mayor when it wasn't popular to be Mayor. We fought from street to street. Now we have running water, electricity and the subways are back online..." The speech continued.

In the uninfected seating area, Liam sat beside Rakesh.

"Blah, blah, blah," said the boy beside Rakesh. "Why'd they seat us all together like this, huh? What are we, The Uninfected Weirdos?"

"Yes we are actually," replied Rakesh, matter of fact but the boy just made a face.

"Who's that?" whispered Liam, leaning in.

"That's Chang," said Rakesh. "He has his own online video channel where he complains a lot. It's very popular. He talks for us."

"What do you mean?"

"He bitches a lot about being Uninfected in a city full of Zfreers. He's throwing a party next week, you want to go?"

"Sure," said Liam.

Payak And Hide

Payak returned to his underground world and returned to the area known simply as The Core.

He transferred into the pressurized spherical core which was a biohazard containment area.

As he entered his inner world the lights in the laboratory turned on.

A light in a sealed glass room lit up and revealed a curled up shape in the corner.

The Z stood up and walked over to the reinforced glass and tried to break through but it was useless.

Payak looked at his twin brother who was still a Z and they faced each other across the glass.

Bloody drool dripped down from the mouth of his brother.

Payak switched on a monitor which was a feed to a camera that looked at the Uninfected seating area on the surface.

Payak watched as Liam and Rakesh left with the other uninfected.

Payak looked at the camera and then at his brother.

"Fresh meat, brother," said Payak. He looked at his brother in a slightly evil way like he might be toying with him.